

## “Memories of William Brigham and Edith Benson Parkinson”

by their daughter Karma Parkinson Parkinson

(excerpts from *Autobiography of Karma Parkinson Parkinson* [1979])

### My Father

Father was a self made man. He came from England with his parents when he was a small boy. He crossed the plains to Oregon and as he grew older he found his way to Utah, working at different jobs.

As I remember him, his hair was beautiful, wavy and white. He didn't talk a great deal. When he came home from the office he started reading his newspaper or some book. He was always studying. He enjoyed delving into subjects such as psychology, palmistry, astrology and learned to read the stars and read horoscopes. I didn't like this idea so much because some man he studied with wrote Veda's horoscope and predicted that something awful would happen to her, so Veda wasn't allowed to grow up normally and have boy friends (she never went out only when escorted by one of her brothers), and she was very unhappy and didn't marry until she was too old to have children, which was a tragedy.

Father was also very strict about people who courted his children coming from good stock or the right families. I was always embarrassed when a new boy came to take me out and I would introduce him to my father. He would look at him and say, "Who is your father," before even saying hello. I believe that this is a very important factor in courtship, but I don't think parents should interfere too much. They should teach their children correct principles and let them choose their own life mates. Father was very determined that several of my half sisters shouldn't marry certain boys, but as things turned out it seemed that they would have been better off and much happier if they had married the boys they fell in love with first, but gave up because of some objection that father had to them.

I felt very lucky that he approved of the man I wanted to marry and knew and respected his family and ancestors and was very happy to give his consent.

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One thing father believed was not to give his children everything they wanted and I knew later that this was a good thing. Maybe he could have afforded to give me some of the things that children have now but I didn't ever own a bicycle and I wanted one so much. I learned to ride on an old one that our neighbors had. I don't think I ever had a pair of roller skates either, but I learned to skate and when they turned the dance hall into a roller skating rink I went skating whenever I could get hold of enough money.

As I got older and learned to sew father was always willing to buy materials for me to make my own clothes. In fact he had a charge account at John Anderson's Store. John Sr., father's good friend, ran it. Father never objected to my buying anything I wanted to get there to sew on.

I was always glad that mother was determined that I go to school as long as I wanted to, because she had been deprived of a formal education. Every fall after I started college father would say, "This will be the last year. A high school education is enough for a girl." But I would always plead that I would be qualified to teach high school if I could just finish and mother would come to my rescue and I'd register again and when I finally got my degree and contemplated teaching, I was so shy and scared I felt like I just couldn't teach and father was sweet and said, "It will be all right, you don't need to." Maybe it would have been better for me if he had pushed me out on my own and I would have overcome my inferiority complex many years sooner than I did. But I was happy to get married and have a family and had a feeling that I could teach school and support my children if I had to. Also I felt that my education better qualified me to be a mother.

Father was a very good doctor and always took care of our physical needs. I'm afraid I depended on him too much because when I got a family of my own I didn't know any simple remedies and didn't have any self confidence. I had been so used to father prescribing something. My husband was quite disgusted because the first thing I wanted to do was call a doctor.

A lot of people depended on father and loved him because of his service to them. When I was a child I liked to go with him to call on his sick patients. He had a nice buggy and a faithful horse he drove all over the valley (Cache). Later when I was about 16 or 17 the first cars came out and father was one of the first men in Logan to get one. He had a Ford that had to be cranked by hand. There was an iron wrench the boys would push into a socket and turn around right quick and that would start the engine. It was a great day when the self starter was put in the cars and all we had to do was step on it. The men used to turn that crank sometimes until they were exhausted before it would start.

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Our first car had a top that we could fold up and push back when the weather was good. We felt that we couldn't see the scenery with the top up. When it was cold or stormy we put the top up and fastened storm curtains on. They were made of ising glass. We didn't use cars much in the winter and got the sleighs out when we had to go far.

It wasn't long until I learned to drive the car and could take father to make his calls. I would also watch his office (as we called it) sometimes. Now they call it being a receptionist. I would answer the phone and admit patients when father was busy in another part of the office. I held a light one time while he performed a minor operation on a man.

About a year before my marriage I had the desire to watch the birth of a child, so father agreed to take me with him. We went up into the East part of town to deliver a woman who had given birth to nine children. The people were very poor and father told me that he had delivered this woman's nine children and had never been paid a cent. When the baby was born he handed it to me and told me to take some oil and clean it off and dress it while he took care of the mother. I don't know what kind of a job I did but I felt quite helpless.

Quite often father would go back East for a few months and brush up on the latest medical practices. It was always exciting to go down to the old railroad station at the end of Center Street at West Center to meet the train that brought him home. Those big old engines they used to have to pull the cars would make such a noise as it steamed, sputtered and clanged along the street tracks as it pulled in, would always send my heart up into my throat and make me tremble all over. There were always gifts for us—clothes, Horatio Alger books, etc.

Captions from p. 6  
(Photo of WBP with horse and buggy)

**My father and his old horse Jeff. I used to ride in this buggy with him when he called to see his patients. I was just a child.**

**This is the buggy Jeff took from house to house and waited each time and then went home one day when father was delayed at the first house.**

Caption from p. 7  
Photo of WBP in car

**This little Dodge was one of the first cars in Logan. I was in college then and used to drive father around the valley to call on his patients.**

The time came when father decided to go to Europe and specialize in the eye, ear, nose and throat. He had to learn the German language so he could enter the post graduate school there, so he got some books and went to work. Every evening was spent studying. By that time I was in college and I decided to study German too, so I registered for a class and studied a little bit with him.

This was a wonderful thing. He was past fifty and had a big family and he was able to master German well enough to be able to go over there and successfully complete the course he wanted. By the time he was ready to return home the United States was involved in World War I. The big ocean liner the *Luciatania* had just been sunk by a German submarine and he embarked on the sister ship the *Maratania*. We read of the sinking of this big ship and then of the attempt to sink the sister ship that father was on. Those were tense days. For several days we didn't hear anything and then one day a messenger boy came with a wire from father stating that they had landed in Canada and they were alright. He told us later that the submarines had chased them. They had darkened the ship and left their course so were saved. How grateful we were.

My half sister Elizabeth had worked and saved her money and went to Europe with father.

Father was dedicated to his work. He was called out all hours of the night and day to take care of the sick. We had two telephone systems here at that time, one the Bell system and the other a local one, so father installed two telephones. He had our house wired so at night he would unplug the two phones that were downstairs. I can see him now when it was bedtime gathering up his two telephones and carrying them upstairs where he slept. He would plug in the phones, place them on a little stand by his bed so he could answer them in the night and maybe phone in a perscription to the drugstore or tell the patient what to do, or if necessary he would get up, hook the old horse to the buggy (or later crank up the old car) and go out in the night to take care of his sick patient.

When the flu epidemic hit in 1914 he worked day and night. Those were terrible days. Every day someone called to tell mother of the death of some dear friend or relative. We had to wear masks over our faces if we went out in public places and then it got so bad that all schools and places of entertainment were closed. People who were well enough were asked to go into homes and help those who were stricken. I wanted to help and went into a home where all the family was sick in bed. It didn't take me long to catch the germ and mother had Veda and me to take care of. My half sister Alice was expecting a baby and she was stricken and was buried with her baby, leaving a little boy.

It was spring when they brought the body of my brother Ben home from the war and we couldn't have a funeral. Friends came in the house one at a time to view the remains and stood on the lawn while we held a short service, with the speakers on the front porch and our friends and relatives standing on the lawn. This flu was very contagious and we had to take every precaution.

Father had a creed that he lived by. He had it printed on small cards and gave them to his friends. This is the creed of Dr. Wm. B. Parkinson, Sr. Don't keep your fountains of your love and tenderness sealed up until your friends are dead; fill their lives with sweetness now. Speak approving and cheering words, while their ears can hear, and while their hearts can be thrilled and made happier by them. The kind things you will say after they are gone, say them before they go. The flowers you mean to send for their coffins, bestow them now and so brighten and sweeten their earthly homes before they leave them. If my friends have sweet perfumes and sympathies and affection which they intend to bestow upon my dead body, I'd rather they'd give them to me in my troubled and weary hours. That I may be refreshed and cheered while I need them. I'd rather have a plain coffin without a flower, a funeral without a uelogy, than a life without the sweetness of love and sympathy. Let us learn to annoint our friends beforehand for their burial. Postmortum kindness does not cheer the burdened spirit. Flowers upon the coffin shed no fragrance backward over the weary way by which loved ones have traveled.

## My Mother

Mother was a very warm, friendly person, but shy. She had lots of friends. People liked to be with her. I loved to sit and listen when her friends came to talk with her.

Her father, Ezra Taft Benson, died when she was very young and she always worked hard to help her mother. She washed dishes and scrubbed bed clothes when she had to stand on a stool to reach the tub. So she was deprived of a formal education, but she was refined and a perfect lady. Her diction was flawless and she taught us to speak correct English. She had a good philosophy and an abiding faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. One would think she had obtained a degree in psychology. She was a natural psychologist and would say, "You are as sick as you think you are. Your illness is all in your mind." She felt that our minds controlled our feelings to a great extent and that if we thought right we would be alright.

She had lived polygamy and believed it was God inspired and taught me to feel the same way. I can remember her telling me of a dream she had at the time it was hard for her to live this law. She dreamed that she went to a meeting that was held at the Tabernacle and her father, one of the apostles, was sitting on the stand. There was a vacant seat next to him and he motioned to her to come up and sit there by him. She always felt that she would be rewarded by being with her father in the next life, because she was the only one of his 36 children who lived this divine law.

Mother always had a little saying for every occasion that she had learned from her mother. When I got married she said, "Now remember Karma, stand up to the manger, hay or no hay." We often thought of that because the time came when there was not much hay but we always managed some how or someone would come to our rescue, so we never really suffered. During the great depression I often longed for some of the little extras.

When my sister-in-law became quite a trial to me, Mother said, "It's just a test the Lord has for you to see what kind of stuff you are made of." And when I thought that I had more troubles than I could stand she would say, "The back is always made for the burden, you will make it." This advice really helped me over the rough spots.

Here are some other cliches of hers. "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." "I'll put a bug in his ear." "That's the word with the bark on it." "I couldn't see for looking." "As plain as the nose on your face." "As cute as a bug's ear."

There were always friends and relatives visiting in our home, sitting around the old coal heater in our living room. My half brothers, who were married and lived out of town, always came to visit mother when they came home. She had a keen sense of humor and enjoyed a good joke. My brothers always saved their jokes to tell her.

There were eight children in our family, Fred, Veda, Jack, Ben, Karma, Wallace, Don and Edith. Father had three other wives besides mother. We called them all aunt. When his second wife, Clarisa, died and left several children, mother took Mark, who was then 17, into our home. His sisters, Alice and Hazel, lived with an older married sister, Leone, who moved into Aunt Clarisa's home and took care of them.

This made four big boys in our home. I often wondered how my mother ever survived those days with all that big family and four big boys who were full of life and always getting into mischief with nothing much to do but loaf around. One day Mark, Fred and Jack all came home drunk. She sent them all upstairs to sober up and locked the door. I thought they would knock the house down.

My mother died after a lingering illness and Veda cared for her faithfully until the end and also Don and Edith until Don went away to work and Edith was married. Veda also has been a good mother and is much loved by the three children of the man she married, Dr. Wm. R. Worley.